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Fishermen and Farmers Communities Clientelism Practices and Electoral Politics

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Agriculture and fisheries are critical sectors for national development, yet some researchers argue that these sectors are closely tied to clientelism and electoral practices, including vote buying. This study seeks to provide both theoretical and empirical evidence on whether clientelism and electoral politics can be considered political commodities, particularly within the context of farming and fishing communities. The study examines the relationship between clientelism, electoral outcomes, and regional economic conditions, especially regarding poverty and local economies. Utilizing a systematic literature review of 30 accredited and reputable international journals, the research finds that clientelism continues to be prevalent in both developed and developing countries, particularly in regions with significant economic and welfare disparities. The journal criteria are: a) Literature is only in the form of international journals; b) Reputable international journals indexed by Scopus; and indexed in international databases such as Copernicus and others; and c) Current scientific journals published between 2014-2024. These disparities create fertile ground for clientelist practices, as they are used strategically by political actors to win elections. Empirical evidence from regional elections suggests that while clientelism may influence electability, its connection to economic improvement and the effectiveness of welfare programs remains weak. To mitigate the ongoing influence of clientelism in electoral politics, this study recommends several practical interventions: the regeneration of political candidates (patrons) from political parties, aligning campaign promises with the actual needs of communities, innovating electoral socialization strategies, presenting trustworthy and competent political figures, and fostering collective awareness at the community level about the importance of informed voting and social movements in elections. These measures aim to reduce the persistence of clientelism and promote more transparent and effective electoral practices.

Keywords: Clientelism, Electoral Politics, Fishermen, Farmers, Poverty, Regional Economy, Agriculture and Fisheries Sector

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and fisheries are cornerstone sectors for a nation's development, with control over food production often equated to control over global power. As a result, these sectors frequently become political commodities used to secure votes (electoral support), by any means necessary. According to Bahamonde and Canales (2022), this dynamic leads to clientelism and electoral politics, when politicians use such sectors for political gain.

Clientelism is often used synonymously with client politics. Scholars define clientelism as the exchange of goods and services in return for political support, typically involving a "*quid pro quo*" arrangement, whether implicit or explicit (Hicken *et al*., 2022; Pellicer *et al*., 2021; Stokes *et al*., 2013). This practice laid the groundwork for the emergence of patronage politics and vote buying (Kramon, 2017). In this context, the terms *patron-client* and *patronage* describe the relationship between two unequal parties: one holds more power, status, or wealth, known as the patron, while the other, with lesser power, is referred to as the client.

Isaac *et al*. (2022) stated that electoral politics refers to the process of class struggle and conflict within a democratic system. Fishermen and farmers, despite both being part of the rural economy, face different economic pressures and political agendas, which leads to distinct patterns of political affiliation. The study suggests that over time (Isaac *et al*., 2022), these groups may shift political allegiances based on changes in their economic conditions, government policies affecting their livelihoods, and broader class-based struggles. This shift in political behavior highlights the fluidity of political identities and the role of class in shaping democratic

participation. Fishermen and farmers engage in electoral politics differently due to their unique social and economic positions, which reflect their broader class interests. Over time, the political affiliations of these groups change in response to shifting economic realities, policy changes, and class struggle. These shifting allegiances demonstrate how electoral politics is not just about individual candidates or parties, but a larger struggle between different classes with competing interests.

Electoral politics serves as a mechanism for class struggle within a democracy, with groups like fishermen and farmers navigating these struggles by adjusting their political affiliations in response to changing economic and social conditions. The study emphasizes the dynamic nature of political practices shaped by class forces and the broader socio-economic landscape.

Clientelism involves asymmetrical relationships between political actors, typically categorized as patrons, brokers, and clients. In client politics, organized interest groups secure benefits for themselves at the expense of the broader public. Client politics often intersects with identity politics, especially in elite pluralist or rigid duopolistic systems, where lobbies hold significant influence in shaping public policy. In contrast, entrepreneurial politics, or the politics of conviction, represents the opposite of clientelism. Political scientists such as Hicken and Nathan (2022); Hicken (2011) identify four key elements of clientelistic relationships in political practice: a) Dyadic relationships, these are two-way relationships between; actors; b) Contingency, the delivery of services to a citizen by a politician or broker is contingent on the citizen's actions in support of the politician or party through which they receive services; c) Hierarchy, the politician or party holds a higher position of power than the citizen; and d) Iteration, the relationship is ongoing, rather than a one-time exchange.

From the perspective of traditional clientelism theory, as articulated by Bahamonde and Canales (2022), political parties seeking electoral support often invest in vote buying. In some cases, the theory suggests that vote buying is more likely to occur when a party and/or candidate loses a general election. However, the relationship between electoral transactions (vote buying) and electoral outcomes remains weak and underexplored in several countries, especially in terms of how clientelism interacts with election results.

Bahamonde and Canales (2022) argue that this limitation stems from two key reasons. First, the theory assumes that losses and gains influence a party's decision-making process in the same way, without accounting for the potential differences in strategy based on the nature of the election result. Second, the framework focuses solely on the absolute level of utility for clientelist parties—essentially, the immediate benefits of vote buying—while neglecting the changes in outcomes relative to a reference point (such as previous electoral expectations or prior political conditions), which could influence a party's decisions.

Such intensity and contestation in elections create a fertile ground for clientelism and vote-buying practices. This is not merely an assumption; scholars such as Saikkonen (2021); Miscoiu and Kakdeu (2021); Corstange (2018); Keefer and Vlaicu (2017); Kitschelt and Altamirano (2015);Diaz-Cayeros (2008) have all warned that the more contested an election, the higher the risk of losing, and the greater the incentive to engage in vote buying. From a risk management perspective, this approach is logical. If vote buying is viewed as a form of insurance against political losses, then parties that aim to maximize utility will "buy insurance" primarily in risky scenarios—those in which defeat in the election is a likely outcome. As Arrow (Bahamonde and Canales, 2022) explains, "those who are most at risk will buy more insurance than others."

Concerns about vote buying are particularly prevalent in countries with large impoverished populations, such as those in the developing world. Several studies indicate a clear connection between political contestation, vote buying, and poverty (Stokes, 2021; Kitschelt and Altamirano, 2015). In poor communities, the potential for vote buying is often higher because direct monetary transfers tend to be more attractive than uncertain future benefits tied to policy changes. As a result, clientelist political parties often target the poor in an effort to expand their electoral base (Stokes *et al*., 2013; Weitz-Shapiro, 2012).

Noak (2024); Majid and Shami (2024); Ferrol-Schulte *et al*. (2014) all highlight that the practice of clientelism and patronage (patron-client relationships) is closely tied to the distribution and access to natural resource management, particularly in coastal and rural areas. Supporting these findings, Pellicer and Wegner (2023); Adisel *et al*. (2023), Aida *et al*. (2020); Poteete (2019); Haryanto (2017), Miñarro *et al*. (2016); Cinar (2016); Anderson *et al*. (2015) have shown that rural (primarily farming) and coastal (primarily fishing) communities are often victimized by patron-client relationships and electoral manipulation. In broader cases of clientelism and patronage, as reported by Roberts *et al*. (2022); Liu (2021); Beg (2021); Kurosaki *et al*. (2021), these practices extend into the control and distribution of land and sea spaces. Consequently, poor farmers and fishermen often find themselves forced to rent land or are targeted by vote-buying schemes aimed at securing electoral gains.

In the context of electoral politics, farmers and fishermen, who are economically vulnerable, often become key electoral issues. For instance, Jares and Malhotra (2024); and Gupta (2024) highlight how political actors direct attitudes and behaviors, mobilizing farmers with promises of market advantages and policy improvements to secure electoral support for their parties. Similarly, Gulotty and Strezhnev (2023) in their study point to the role of agricultural budget politics, where financial resources are allocated with the goal of influencing electoral outcomes.

Indonesia is one of the countries that fully implements direct elections. Since the 1999 reformation, Indonesia has adopted a direct election system, and in 2024, the country will hold simultaneous elections at both the national and regional levels (for Governor, Regent, and Mayor). In addition, village head elections will be held simultaneously in each region. General elections in Indonesia are closely related to the practice of clientelism. Clientelism refers to a system in which political leaders provide material rewards (such as jobs, public services, or financial assistance) to voters in exchange for their political support. This practice has been observed in many parts of Indonesia since the democratization process, which began in the late 1990s after the fall of President Soeharto's authoritarian regime. Many studies have shown that Indonesian politicians, especially in regional elections, use patronage networks to secure votes. Local elites, such as village heads, district heads, and members of the military or police, act as intermediaries who distribute state resources (e.g., government contracts, infrastructure projects, or public sector jobs) to constituents in exchange for electoral support (Cahyati and Lepo, 2019). There is the practice of vote buying, where candidates or political parties offer direct material incentives—such as money, food, or other goods—to voters. This practice is especially prevalent in areas where institutional oversight and voter education are weak (Cahyati and Lepo, 2019).

The same thing also happened in several other countries, as reported by Bahamonde and Canales (2022); Saikkonen (2021); Miscoiu and Kakdeu (2021); Corstange (2018); Keefer and Vlaicu (2017); Kitschelt and Altamirano (2015); Stokes *et al.* (2013), suggests a high likelihood of clientelism and electoral politics taking place, especially considering that around 10% of Indonesia's population lives in poverty. This impoverished group is primarily concentrated in rural and coastal areas, where the majority are farmers and fishermen.

The preliminary information presented above serves as an "entry point" or a "new path" for researchers to further explore the practices of clientelism and electoral politics in the context of resource control. Given this, an analytical question arises: *How do the practices and effects of clientelism and electoral politics impact fishing and farming communities?* This question forms the central focus of the analysis, which aims to provide an answer.

The objectives of this study are threefold: 1) To uncover theoretical evidence of electoral political practices in fishing and farming communities; 2) To uncover theoretical evidence of clientelism practices in fishing and farming communities; and 3) To present empirical evidence on the relationship between electoral politics and the welfare of fishermen and rural communities, focusing on poverty rates and regional economies, specifically through the agriculture and fisheries sectors. This will be done by examining case studies from Konawe Islands Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electoralism examines voter behavior, particularly how it is influenced by social class. Clientelism, on the other hand, refers to the relationship between political patrons (those in power) and clients (those seeking political favors or support). In the context of electoral politics, clientelism is a strategy used by political leaders to gain support and secure victory by offering material rewards or benefits in exchange for political loyalty. Therefore, clientelism in this framework is primarily about the patron-client dynamic aimed at winning elections.

***Definition of Clientelism*:** Stokes *et al.* (2013) define clientelism as a form of *non-programmatic* policy within distributive politics. Unlike *programmatic* policies, which are formal, public, and designed to broadly address societal needs (e.g., universal welfare policies), clientelism does not meet these criteria. Instead, clientelism is characterized by the distribution of targeted benefits or resources to specific individuals or groups in exchange for political support, often in the form of votes.

Further distinguishing clientelism from *pork-barrel politics*, Stokes *et al.* (2013) highlight that in clientelist systems, voters are not just recipients of broad, indiscriminate government spending; they are offered specific benefits or the opportunity to avoid costs with the explicit understanding that they will repay the patron with loyalty and votes. This reciprocal arrangement emphasizes a transactional relationship between patrons (those in power) and clients (those receiving benefits). The patron/client system can be understood as a mutual arrangement between those who hold authority, wealth, social status, or other personal resources (patrons) and those who benefit from their influence or support (clients). Patrons control access to selective goods and opportunities, and often place themselves or their supporters in strategic positions from which they can divert resources and services to their own interests. In return, clients are expected to reciprocate by offering their political support, and in many cases, their votes (Kramon, 2018).

Patrons in clientelist systems typically target low-income families because these individuals are in greater need of resources that patrons can provide, such as jobs, subsidies, or social services. In exchange, patrons seek valuable resources from these families, such as time, votes, and involvement in local support networks that can influence others (Kramon, 2018). However, patrons themselves often lack the detailed, local knowledge necessary to effectively manage these exchanges. To overcome this challenge, they hire intermediaries known as *brokers*.

Brokers are better equipped to understand the needs of targeted voters, determine which voters require more or less encouragement, and monitor whether voters are following through with their side of the bargain (i.e., casting votes in favor of the patron). Brokers thus play a crucial role in the

functioning of clientelism by acting as intermediaries who facilitate the exchange between patrons and clients.

However, this creates a *principal-agent problem*. As Stokes *et al.* (2013) point out, brokers serve political leaders (the principals) but may not always target resources exactly in the way that the patrons (the principals) would want. Brokers may have their own interests, priorities, or biases, leading to inefficiencies or distortions in how resources are distributed. This misalignment between the goals of the patron (principal) and the actions of the broker (agent) can significantly affect the effectiveness and outcomes of clientelist strategies.

The principal-agent problem shows inefficiencies, inconsistencies, and corruption in clientelist systems, especially when brokers act in ways that don't align with the patron's political goals. Political loyalty and clientelist networks may be affected by this tension (Mares and Young, 2016; Stokes *et al.*, 2013).

To completely grasp clientelism, one must highlight both patrons' and clients' mutually beneficial transaction and the system's power and position divisions. While clientelism involves a reciprocal exchange—where patrons provide material benefits in return for political support—the relationship is inherently unequal. Patrons (and sometimes sub-patrons or brokers) have exclusive access to resources and opportunities, which creates a hierarchical dynamic where clients depend on patrons for these goods and services.

In return for receiving benefits, clients are expected to provide political support, typically in the form of votes. This exchange is structured as a quid pro quo: patrons offer resources, and clients offer votes in return. The assumption underlying most models of clientelism is that politicians are able to monitor how clients vote, allowing them to reward or punish clients based on whether they fulfill their part of the bargain. This monitoring is crucial for the effectiveness of the system; without the ability to track voters' behavior, the exchange would be inefficient, and the system could break down.

Research reveals that systematic voter surveillance at the polls is unlikely (Hicken and Nathan, 2020). This calls into doubt clientelism's viability. Despite less monitoring than theoretical models suggest, clientelism can still function effectively due to informal mechanisms like local political brokers who observe and report voting behavior or social pressures within communities that reinforce political loyalty. The lack of formal and regular monitoring challenges the paradigm and shows clientelist exchange inefficiencies and leakages.

Clientelism relies on selective access to resources, unequal power dynamics, and informal surveillance to maintain patron-client relationships. However, ineffective monitoring may impair system efficiency and reliability over time. This shows the intricacy of clientelism as a political tactic, where power imbalances and monitoring restrictions affect its success (Hicken and Nathan, 2020).

Patronage, participation, abstention, and vote buying are subcategories of clientelism, according to Kramon (2018) and Stokes *et al*. (2013). Members receive intra-party benefits through patronage. Stokes *et al*. (2013) continued that voter turnout, coined by Nichter, provides gifts or bribes to voters to come to the polling station while abstention purchase provides gifts or bribes to voters so that they do not come to the polling station. Vote buying is the direct transfer of goods or services, in exchange for someone's support and vote. The outcome for the goods or services is the question "Do you vote for me or will you vote for me?" (Gans-Morse *et al*., 2014; Goodin, 2009).

History of Clientelism: Some literature suggests that the practice of clientelism has deep historical roots, extending all the way back to ancient Rome. In Roman society, the relationship between the *patronus* (patron) and *cliens* (client) was considered central to understanding political dynamics (Roniger *et al*., 2004). Although there were mutual obligations between patron and client, the relationship was inherently hierarchical. Rather than being a static entity, this relationship is better understood as a network (*clientela*), where patrons themselves might be obligated to more powerful figures, and clients could have multiple patrons. This complex web of relationships increased the potential for conflicts of interest.

While the *familia* (family) was the fundamental unit of Roman society, these interlocking patron-client networks restricted individual autonomy but also facilitated the development of a more complex social structure. Historians in the late medieval period later adapted this concept into the idea of "bastard feudalism," where similar patron-client dynamics shaped the feudal system. As with many political terms, there is some ambiguity in how terms like "clientelism," "patron-client relationship," "patronage," and "political machine" are used, as they often describe related or overlapping phenomena (Roniger *et al*., 2004).

The practice of clientelism is also evident in the political dynamics of ancient Rome, particularly during the reigns of Julius Caesar (49–44 BCE) and Tiberius (14–16 CE). Both emperors used clientelist strategies to consolidate power and gain loyalty from the public. This often involved the distribution of gifts or resources to the populace, a common tactic in clientelist systems where material benefits were exchanged for political loyalty.

In the 1500s, the French political theorist Étienne de La Boétie (Kramon, 2018) did not explicitly use the term "clientelism," but his analysis of political power aligns closely with the concept. La Boétie described how rulers, particularly emperors, would use gifts and material benefits to secure the loyalty of the people. These gifts were often perceived as bribes, and La Boétie argued that the willingness of individuals to accept these rewards was a crucial factor in sustaining the authority of tyrannical rulers. Although La Boétie did not use the modern terminology of "clientelism," his ideas highlighted the transactional nature of political loyalty, where rulers maintained power by securing the

allegiance of their subjects through the distribution of material goods.

***Forms of Clientelism in Electoral Politics*:** Politicians can engage in clientelism at both the individual and group levels, and these forms of clientelism are distinguished by the scale at which the political exchange occurs. Mares and Young (2016); Stokes *et al*. (2013); Lindberg (2010) differentiate two main forms: individual-level clientelism and group-level clientelism.

***Individual-Level Clientelism*:** Individual clientelism involves direct politician-voter interactions. Providing physical products, services, or financial support to a voter in exchange for their vote in a forthcoming election is a prevalent kind of individual-level clientelism (Stokes *et al*., 2013). In a simple transaction, the patron (politician) offers material benefits and the client (voter) gives their vote.

Individual clientelism can also be forceful. Threatening citizens with loss of perks or services unless they support a candidate or party is coercion (Mares and Young, 2016). This clientelism uses power asymmetries and manipulation to force voters to choose between political support and their livelihood or resources. Not often are politicians the ones that start individual-level clientelism. Voters may encourage leaders to give benefits for electoral support. Lindberg (2010) observes that citizens can demand specific products or services, driving politicians into clientelism.

The study of individual-level clientelism illuminates clientelist political exchange methods and dynamics. It can involve direct vote-buying or coercive measures, and its success depends on voter behavior monitoring and community resources. Clientelism is easier in smaller, poorer groups because voters have more material wants and less anonymity, making them simpler to influence. According to Nichter (2008), the clientelist exchange is not always about monitoring every voter, but about targeting the proper voters who already support the patron. It shows the strategic calculations behind vote-buying and the range of clientelist approaches.

***Group-Level Clientelism*:** In many young low-income democracies, clientelism can take the form of group-level targeting where parties channel benefits to particular groups of voters contingent on past or future electoral support (Hicken, 2011). For group-based targeting to succeed, parties must find efficient ways to distribute benefits while holding voters accountable, ensuring that they keep their commitments (Stokes *et al*., 2013). This has led parties to employ intermediaries, often referred to as 'middlemen', who provide detailed information about who needs what and what types of voters will and will not vote for them, regardless of the benefits provided. Party intermediaries are not the only type of intermediary that mediates clientelist exchanges. Some organizational intermediaries represent particular interest groups but mobilize voters for multiple parties, hybrid intermediaries also represent particular interest groups but

demonstrate strong party loyalty and independent intermediaries do not represent particular interest groups or demonstrate stable partisan attachments (Holand and Palmer-Rubin, 2015).

The scholarly consensus has so far avoided the question of why parties channel clientelist benefits to some groups more than others. Some earlier work on group-level targeting argues that politicians are more likely to direct party favors toward their co-ethnics because ethnicity helps parties solve the commitment problem that is critical to making clientelism work (Chandra, 2004). More contemporary work emphasizes the importance of partisan loyalty, whereby politicians direct most of their vote-buying efforts toward persuadable voters, those who are indifferent to the party's programmatic goals or somewhat opposed to them.

Some research has challenged these claims but suggests that most instances of vote-buying in clientelist democracies may be turnout buying, where parties provide benefits to their most loyal supporters in the hope that they will appear at the polls on election day (Nichter, 2008). However, the lack of a well-developed political machine does not preclude clientelist targeting (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012; and Baldwin, 2019). Recent studies show that in many developing democracies, political parties often lack the organizational capacity to monitor voter behavior at the individual level, so they refine their targeting strategies by updating their beliefs about which groups are most responsive to their clients' appeals (Gottlieb and Larreguy, 2020; Kitschelt, 2020).

***Alternatives and Contraversions to Clientelism in Electorals*:** Clientelism generally has negative effects on democracy and governance, with its impact on the economy being more uncertain. In a democracy, where voters are supposed to hold elected officials accountable for their actions, clientelism undermines this accountability. This is because clientelism ties votes to rewards given to clients, rather than to the performance of elected officials in office. Additionally, clientelism weakens key democratic institutions, such as the secret ballot and administrative oversight, which can lead to reduced government efficiency and overall institutional fragility (Hicken, 2011).

Corruption and perceptions of corruption are strongly linked to clientelistic systems for several reasons. In many clientelist systems, patrons often appear to be above the law. Additionally, certain practices associated with clientelism, such as vote-buying, can be inherently illegal (Singer, 2009). The resources that patrons need to sustain clientelism may also involve illegitimate means of acquisition. A study in Africa by Bøttkjær and Justesen (2021) found that voters in clientelist systems are less likely to punish corrupt politicians through elections, highlighting the persistence of corruption in such systems.

Some scholars argue that because patrons in clientelistic systems prioritize controlling and distributing private goods to their supporters, they often neglect public goods like

infrastructure (e.g., roads) and public services (e.g., schools), which are essential for economic development. Additionally, the rent-seeking and corruption typically associated with clientelism can have detrimental effects on the economy. However, despite these concerns, there remains significant uncertainty about the overall economic impact of clientelism (Hicken, 2011).

Clientelism is often associated with corruption, as both involve political actors using resources for personal gain. However, the two are not the same. Corruption is typically defined as "dishonest and fraudulent behavior by those in power, often involving bribery," whereas clientelism refers to "the distribution of benefits to individuals or groups in exchange for electoral support" (Larreguy, 2013). While the two are closely related due to significant overlap, not all forms of corruption are linked to clientelism; for example, voter intimidation or ballot rigging are distinct forms of corruption. Clientelism is viewed negatively because it focuses on generating private benefits for patrons and their clients, often at the expense of the broader public. As a result, it can block access to public resources for those who are not part of the patron-client network, reinforcing inequality and undermining the equitable distribution of public goods (Kawata, 2017).

Clientelism, as a political strategy, differs fundamentally from other approaches that focus on broad programmatic goals or prioritize competence. It is often seen as a relic of political backwardness or a form of corruption, with the assumption that political modernization will eventually reduce or eliminate it. However, alternative perspectives suggest that clientelism and the patronage networks that sustain it are persistent features of political systems. These views highlight the resilience of clientelism, even in more modern or developing political contexts (Bahamonde and Canales, 2022; Roniger *et al.*, 2004).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a literature study approach, utilizing two primary sources of literature: journals and report documents. The first approach involves a systematic literature review (SLR), a method commonly used to map existing research related to the practice of clientelism and electoral politics among fishermen and farmers. This SLR approach helps address the first and second research objectives. The second approach uses document-based literature studies, which are employed to answer the third research question: providing empirical evidence on how electoral politics affect the welfare of fishermen and farmers.

As summarized by Lim *et al*. (2022); Luft *et al*. (2022); Kosztyán *et al*. (2021); Pursell and McRae (2020); Snyder (2019); Cash (2018); Palmatier *et al*. (2018); Sio *et al.* (2015), systematic literature review (SLR) research is a structured, comprehensive approach to identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing all relevant studies on a specific topic or research question. This method follows a well-defined, transparent, and replicable process that minimizes bias, ensuring that conclusions are based on the best available evidence.

The use of SLR in studies is selected purposively with various considerations. If we look at the opinions of Atkinson (2024); Shaheen *et al*. (2023); Williams *et al*. (2020); Lame (2019), there are four benefits of using the systematic literature review (SLR) technique, namely:

1. Comprehensive: SLR provides a more comprehensive and reliable summary of evidence than traditional narrative reviews because it follows a standardized methodology.

2. Reducing bias: Using a systematic method to select and evaluate studies, the Systematic Literature Review minimizes the potential for subjective judgment and bias in the review process.

3. Evidence-based decisions: Findings from a Systematic Literature Review can guide policy decisions, inform practice, or identify gaps in knowledge that require further investigation.

4. Replicable: The transparency of the process allows others to replicate the review or apply it to other areas of research.

The application of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) technique relies on secondary data, primarily drawn from scientific journals. The process involves several key stages, beginning with the formulation of the research question and culminating in the reporting of findings. According to multiple sources (Chukwuere, 2023; Snyder, 2019; Palmatier *et al*., 2018; Galvan and Galvan, 2017; Ravitch and Riggan, 2016; Jahan *et al*., 2016; Boyd and Solarino, 2016; Rodell *et al*., 2016; Tricco *et al*., 2015; Carlborg *et al*., 2014), the SLR process can be summarized as follows:

1. Formulate research questions. Formulate research questions or problems by breaking down broad topics into more specific and answerable sub-questions. These questions should guide the entire review process. This process produces key questions or Research Questions (RQ), to limit the material and reach of the analysis topic. The RQ proposed in the study is "*How are Clientelism and Electoral Politics Practices in Fishermen and Farmers' Communities*".

2. Developing a review protocol. A review protocol is an approach to the review process and includes key decisions including journal criteria, journal search strategy with Zotero, data extraction, and analysis techniques.

3. Establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria set in this study are systematic study design; publication time during the period 2014-2024; and the type of journal is international. Each of these criteria is relevant to the research question. Exclusion criteria set by the literature sources (journals) that must be excluded include methodological problems, studies that do not meet the inclusion criteria, or studies that are too far off-topic.

4. Systematic literature search. The next step is to conduct a comprehensive search across multiple databases (such as

PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar) to identify relevant studies. Search for relevant literature according to the specified RQ. To facilitate filtering and consistency of search topics, the search is only for studies published in the latest international scientific journals. The literature search is carried out in two steps:

a. Determination of literature search keywords (search string) which is based on the search keywords. There are two keywords in question, namely "*How is the practice of clientelism in fishing and farming communities*"; and "*How is electoral politics practiced in fishing and farming communities*".

b. Determination of literature search sources. The literature in question is an international journal. The search uses software assistance to make it easier to manage literature with Zotero.

5. Literature selection and selection. This stage is to filter studies based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. This process involves reviewing titles, abstracts, and full texts. Ensuring the quality of the data produced is done repeatedly. Selection to determine journals that are appropriate to the topic, recent, and reputable as a basis for data quality. The selection criteria for research results are:

a. Literature only in the form of international journals;

b. Reputable international journals indexed by Scopus; and indexed in international databases such as Copernicus and others; and

c. The latest scientific journals published between 2014-2024.

With these provisions, 30 journals were obtained, consisting of 16 journals focusing on clientelism, and 14 journals on the topic of electoral politics.

6. Data extraction. Extracting data from each selected journal. The scope includes the year of publication, main findings, and results. Data extraction to sort and select metadata for each topic and research findings for further synthesis. The goal is to map research topics and findings as a basis for constructing significant roles theoretically or in practice.

7. Quality assessment. Assessing the quality or risk of bias in included studies to avoid misinterpreting findings or data interpretation. This step helps researchers to understand the limitations and strengths of the evidence and to evaluate the robustness of the Conclusions.

8. Data synthesis. The extracted data is synthesized to answer the research questions. Conceptually, there are two main approaches, namely qualitative and quantitative synthesis. The type of synthesis chosen in this study is qualitative synthesis, namely narratively synthesizing the findings of the selected studies. The synthesis process can also involve grouping research based on themes, results, or methodological approaches.

9. Interpretation and reporting. Interpretation of findings in the context of the research question, involving discussion of patterns across studies, inconsistencies in the data, and the overall strength of the evidence. Limitations of the review itself, such as methodological bias are reviewed. These limitations also form the basis for formulating a future research agenda. Stages of writing research results in a journal manuscript (journal draft) for publication. The contents of the manuscript follow standard provisions, starting from the abstract, keywords, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusions, recommendations, and references.

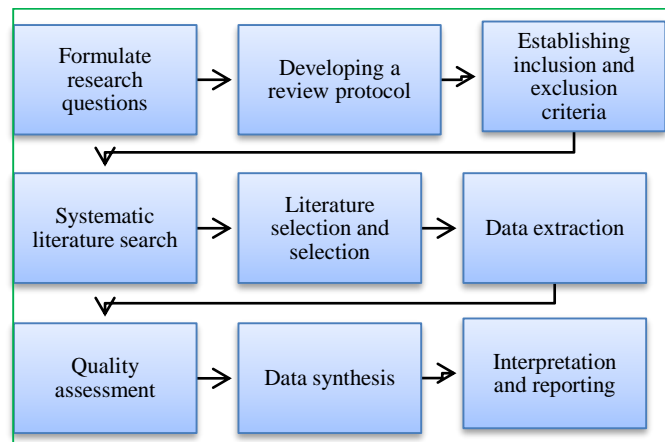In general, the stages of SLR research are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. SLR Research Stages.

The data analysis process uses a qualitative paradigm. According to Perry and Hammond (2002) and based on the review of the research stage, the qualitative analysis technique in systematic literature review (SLR) research is to conduct a synthesis-based analysis (summarizing) of descriptive qualitative research results. The results of the analysis are presented narratively or descriptively to obtain a more in-depth and comprehensive explanation of new evidence.

RESULTS

Electoral Politics Among Fishermen and Farmers: Research journals that examine electoral politics in fishermen and farmers during the period 2014-2024 are 14 (fourteen). Judging from the objects of analysis, they are quite diverse as shown in Table 1,

Based on the publication timeline, the journal on electoral politics in fishermen and farmers appears to be dynamic. The highest number of research journals was published in the years 2022-2023, with 3 journals each, accounting for 21.43% of the total. The second highest numbers were in 2020 and 2024, each having 2 journals, or 14.29%. The smallest number of publications occurred in 2014 and 2018, each with just 1 journal, or 7.14%. This indicates a more concentrated focus

on the topic in recent years, particularly between 2020-2024. The complete data is presented in Figure 2.

Table 1. Number of Journals Researching Electoral Political Practices among Fishermen and Farmers According to Analysis Object.

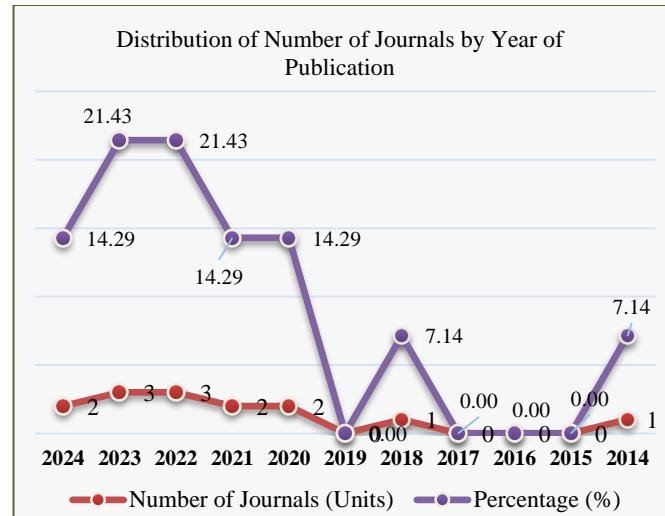| No.	Researcher	Topics
1	Jares and Malhotra (2024)	Policy impact and voter mobilization: evidence from farmers' trade war experiences
2	Gupta (2024)	Paddy politics: Is there an electoral cycle in India's agricultural policy
3	Gulotty and Strezhnev (2023)	The political benefits of the monoculture: Estimating the electoral effect of the market facilitation program
4	Risman *et al.* (2023)	Political participation of fishermen community voters amidst COVID-19 in the local election
5	Mills (2023)	The politics of transnational fishers' movements
6	Shim (2022)	Overpromising social welfare benefits? Electoral competition and welfare politics in Taiwan
7	Anzia *et al.* (2022)	Does receiving government assistance shape political attitudes? evidence from agricultural producers
8	Mehta and Sinha (2022)	The rise and fall of agrarian populism in postcolonial India: Farmers' movements and electoral politics at crossroad
9	Chyzh and Urbatsch (2021)	Bean counters: The effect of soy tariffs on change in republican vote share between the 2016 and 2018 elections
10	Kvartiuk and Herzfeld (2021)	Redistributive politics in Russia: The political economy of agricultural subsidies
11	Abdullah and Choudhury (2020)	An analytical study of the socio-economic and political status of the fishermen community in Golakganj, Dhubri District of Assam (India)
12	Janzen and Hendricks (2020)	Are farmers made whole by trade aid?
13	McAngus (2018)	A survey of Scottish fishermen ahead of Brexit: Political, social and constitutional attitudes
14	Dhanagare (2014)	Negative returns of ambivalence: Electoral politics of the farmers' movement, 1980-2014

Figure 2. Distribution of the Number of Electoral Politics Journals on Fishermen and Farmers by Publication Year.

It appears that there were no journals published on electoral politics for fishermen and farmers during the years 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2019. This gap in research could suggest a lull or lack of interest in the topic during these years, which the text humorously attributes to a possible "boredom" among researchers. This hiatus may reflect shifting academic priorities, changing political climates, or other factors that led to fewer studies on this subject during that period.

Judging from the research subjects regarding electoral politics are distributed into three patterns, namely farmers (agriculture), fishermen (fisheries), and combined (including farmers, fishermen, and other poor people). The results of the analysis are shown in Figure 3.

As shown in Figure 3, the distribution of research objects in electoral politics is predominantly focused on farmers (agriculture), with approximately 64.29% of the total journals (9 out of 14) dedicated to this topic. Notable studies include those by (Jares and Malhotra, 2024, Gupta, 2024; Gulotty and Strezhnev, 2023; Anzia *et al*., 2022; Mehta and Sinha, 2022; Chyzh and Urbatsch, 2021; Janzen and Hendricks, 2020; Kvartiuk and Herzfeld, 2021; Dhanagare, 2014). In contrast, research on electoral politics concerning fishermen (fisheries) accounts for around 28.57% of the journals, with notable contributions from (Risman *et al*., 2023; Mills, 2023; Abdullah and Choudhury, 2020; McAngus, 2018). Only 7.14% of the journals address both farmers and fishermen together, as seen in Shim (2022). This indicates that while the focus is largely on agricultural politics, there is also some attention given to fisheries, with only a small portion of research combining both topics.
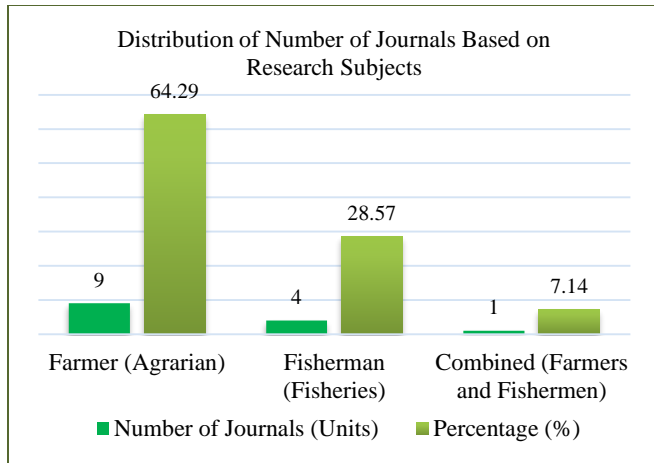
Figure 3. Distribution of the Number of Electoral Political Journals on Fishermen and Farmers According to Research Subjects.

The findings produced by researchers are very diverse because the issues discussed are also broad. The findings are generally grouped into nine (6) topics as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Findings on Electoral Political Practices among Fishermen and Farmers.

No.	Researcher	Findings
1	Jares and Malhotra (2024)	Policy variation does not significantly mobilize voters at the more important issue level.
2	Gupta (2024)	There are significant benefits (commodity prices) leading up to and during the general election and contributing to development.
3	Gulotty and Strezhnev (2023); Kvartiuk and Herzfeld (2021); Janzen and Hendricks, (2020); Dhanagare (2014)	There is compensation politics in commodity trading, with the hope of significant benefits in gaining support (votes).
4	Risman *et al*. (2023); Abdullah and Choudhury (2020)	Apathetic and passive voter groups (fishermen)
5	Mills (2023); Mehta and Sinha (2022)	There has been progress in the role of fishermen and farmers' movements in politics consciously to expand distribution regarding the importance of social movements in politics.
6	Shim (2022)	The promise of social welfare is biased in favor of voters due to

No.	Researcher	Findings
		the low level of electoral trust of community groups.
7	Anzia *et al*. (2022)	The community as a group receiving agricultural assistance has not been able to build a more positive view of the government.
8	Chyzh and Urbatsch (2021)	The production of a commodity is not related to the acquisition of votes
9	McAngus (2018)	Fishermen choose a conservative attitude and take bold action because fishermen have a large (number) and solid group.

Clientelism Among Fishermen and Farmers: Between 2014 and 2024, a total of 16 researchers studied clientelism practices within fishing and farming communities. The objects of analysis in these studies were varied, as detailed in Table 3. These researchers explored different aspects of clientelism, reflecting the complexity and diversity of practices in electoral politics among fishermen and farmers during this period.

Table 3.   Number of Journals Researching Clientelism Practices among Fishermen and Farmers According to Analysis Object.

No.	Researcher	Topics
1	Noak (2024)	Political clientelism in rural areas: understanding the impact on regional head elections in Indonesia
2	Majid and Shami (2024)	Unpacking rural-urban clientelist networks
3	Pellicer and Wegner (2023)	What is bad about clientelism? Citizen perceptions in poor communities in South Africa and Tunisia
4	Adisel *et al*., (2023)	Portraying patron-client in fishermen work relationships: A phenomenon from Bengkulu, Indonesia
5	Roberts *et al*. (2022)	Patron-client relationships shape value chains in an Indonesian island-based fisheries system
6	Stokes (2021)	Clientelism and development: is there a poverty trap?
7	Kurosaki *et al*. (2021)	Out of communal land: Clientelism through delegation of agricultural tenancy contracts
8	Liu (2021)	The abolition of agricultural taxes and the transformation of clientelism in the countryside of Post-Mao China
9	Beg (2021)	Tenancy and clientelism

No.	Researcher	Topics
10	Aida *et al.* (2020)	The patron-client relationship patterns in Siwa Lima Fishermen Community, Aru Islands District Maluku, Indonesia
11	Poteete (2019)	Electoral competition, clientelism, and responsiveness to fishing communities in Senegal
12	Haryanto (2017)	Adaptation and continuities in clientelism in a fishing community in Takalar, South Sulawesi
13	Miñarro *et al.* (2016)	The role of patron-client relations on the fishing behaviour of artisanal fishermen in the Spermonde Archipelago (Indonesia)
14	Cinar (2016)	A comparative analysis of clientelism in Greece, Spain, and Turkey: The rural–urban divide
15	Anderson *et al.* (2015)	Clientelism in Indian villages
16	Ferrol-Schulte *et al.* (2014)	Patron–client relationships, livelihoods and natural resource management in tropical coastal communities

Based on the publication timeline, the research on clientelism practices in fishing and farming communities appears to be dynamic. As shown in Figure 4: a) The highest number of journals was published in 2021, with 4 journals (25% of the total); b) The second largest number of publications occurred in 2016, 2023, and 2024, with 2 journals each (12.50% of the total); and c) Interestingly, no journal publications were found in 2018, indicating a gap in research during that year.
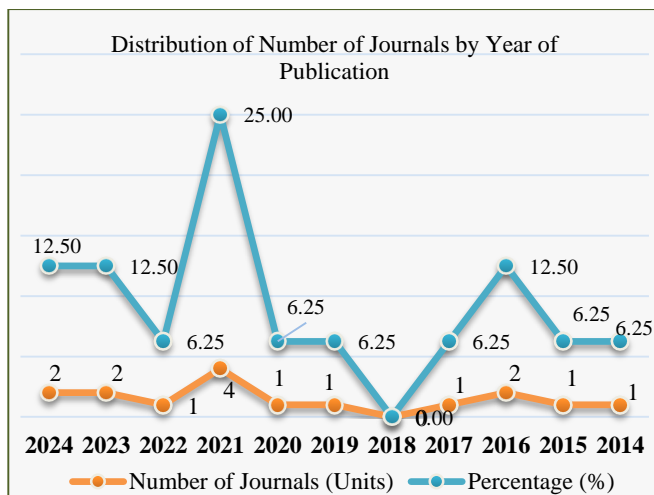

Figure 4. Distribution of the Number of Clientelism Journals on Fishermen and Farmers by Publication Year.

As shown in Figure 5, research on clientelism in fishing and farming communities is distributed into three main categories. First, Fishermen (fisheries) with the largest portion, with 7 journals (43.75%), including works by (Noak, 2024; Majid and Shami, 2024; Kurosaki *et al.*, 2021; Liu, 2021; Beg, 2021; Anderson *et al.*, 2015). Second, Farmers (agrarian), covering 37.50% of journals (7 studies), such as those conducted by (Adisel *et al.*, 2023; Roberts *et al.*, 2022; Aida *et al.*, 2020; Poteete, 2019; Haryanto, 2017; Miñarro *et al.*, 2016; Ferrol-Schulte *et al.*, 2014). Third, Combined (fishermen and farmers), representing 18.75% of research, with studies by Pellicer and Wegner (2023), Stokes (2021); Cinar (2016).
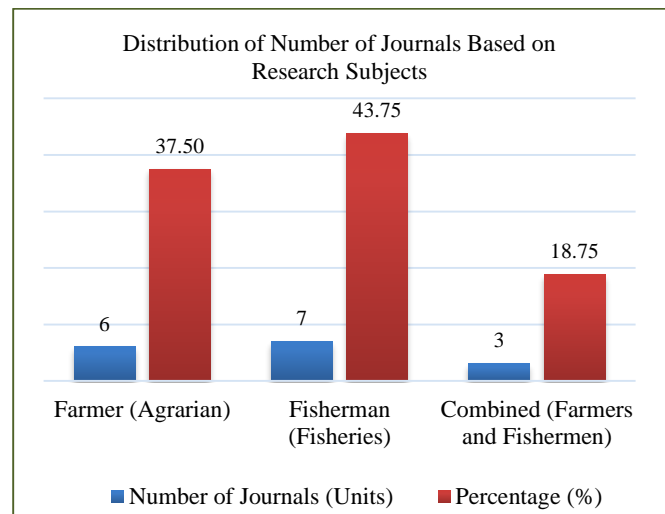

Figure 5. Distribution of the Number of Clientelism Journals on Fishermen and Farmers According to Research Subjects.

The research indicates that clientelism in fishing and farming communities remains a key focus, particularly as it relates to the dynamics of patronage politics and vote buying. A consistent theme across these studies is the use of fishermen and farmers as representations of poverty, which becomes a key target for clientelist practices. These practices are often aimed at securing political loyalty through the distribution of benefits or material goods, leveraging the economic vulnerabilities of these communities.

According to Hicken *et al.* (2022); Pellicer *et al.* (2021); Kramon (2017); Stokes *et al.* (2013), patronage politics and vote buying operate best in underprivileged groups with specific traits. These findings show that clientelism exploits economic disparity to make weak groups more susceptible to political patronage in exchange for electoral support. Table 4 categorizes clientelism studies in fishing and farming communities into six groups. According to the research chronology, several of these findings are consistent, demonstrating that clientelism was prevalent over the

observation period and in multiple locations and nations evaluated by the researchers.

This consistency suggests that clientelism, especially patronage politics and vote buying targeting impoverished populations, was widespread. Similar findings across countries indicate systematic political interference that affects farming and fishing communities worldwide.

Table 4. Research Findings on Clientelism Practices among Fishermen and Farmers.

No.	Researcher	Topics
1	Noak (2024); Beg (2021); Aida *et al.* (2020); Haryanto (2017); Anderson *et al.* (2015)	Clientelism strengthens patron-client relationships and maintains patronage, where political elites exploit the economic dependence of society to gain support through material promises.
2	Majid and Shami (2024); Kurosaki *et al.* (2021); Beg (2021); Aida *et al.* (2020); Haryanto (2017); Ferrol-Schulte *et al.* (2014)	Clientelism networks are complex because their scope is wider, and vary in nature due to geographical dependency, land ownership patterns, minimal facilities, and slums.
3	Pellicer and Wegner (2023)	Clientelism will always exist as long as communities fail to coordinate on the ruler's ideas.
4	Roberts *et al.* (2022); Liu (2021); Aida *et al.* (2020); Anderson *et al.* (2015); Ferrol-Schulte *et al.* (2014)	Clientelism is considered a legitimate strategy to access and dominate resources.
5	Adisel *et al.* (2023); Stokes (2021); Liu (2021); Miñarro *et al.* (2016); Anderson *et al.* (2015)	Clientelism (with patron-clients) maintains economic inequality and poverty and becomes a structural poverty trap.
6	Cinar (2016)	The practice of clientelism, namely patrons and clients in rural areas is easier to observe, while in urban areas it is quite complex, involving political machine competition and various motives.

Based on the data in Figure 5 and Table 4, the practices of clientelism (including patron-client relationships and patronage) are likely to persist as long as political contestation remains tied to poverty, which continues to be exploited as a commodity. In other words, as long as the impoverished populations in fishing and farming communities remain politically vulnerable, clientelist practices will thrive, particularly as a tool for securing electoral support.

This concern is echoed by Pellicer and Wegner (2023), who argue that clientelism will continue as a political strategy unless governments actively address and reshape their approach to poverty. If governments fail to develop comprehensive policies or a broader ideological framework to address poverty, clientelism will remain an effective way for political actors to maintain control and manipulate votes. In this context, poverty becomes a key "commodity" that can be traded for political loyalty, perpetuating cycles of dependency and political patronage.

***Empirical Electoral Evidence on Fishermen's and Farmers' Welfare*:** The empirical evidence in this study aims to examine whether the electoral politics surrounding regional head elections in Konawe Islands Regency (Indonesia) contributed to poverty alleviation and improvements in the regional economy. Specifically, the study investigates whether the electoral outcomes — the vote acquisition of the winning candidate pairs in the 2015 and 2020 regional head elections — led to tangible benefits for the region, particularly in addressing poverty and boosting the local economy.

To assess this, the study uses two key metrics:

1. ***Poverty rates*:** The changes in poverty levels in the region post-election are analyzed to determine if the winning candidates' electoral promises translated into real improvements in the livelihoods of the population.

2. ***Economic contribution of agriculture and fisheries*:** The contribution of the agricultural and fisheries sectors to the regional economy is assessed, using Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) data.

This measure helps evaluate whether the electoral success of candidates also led to policy changes or initiatives that boosted these critical sectors, which are essential for the local economy in Konawe Islands Regency.

The study aims to provide proof of the electoral political practice by connecting electoral outcomes with concrete economic and social indicators, such as poverty alleviation and the performance of key industries (agriculture and fisheries). Table 5 likely presents these data points, helping to illustrate whether the winning candidates' promises or policies contributed to measurable improvements in these areas.

The analysis of the regional head elections in Konawe Islands Regency from 2015 to 2020 provides interesting insights into the relationship between electoral success, poverty alleviation, and regional economic performance. The elected pair, Amrullah and Andi Muhammad Lutfi (the "Beramal" team) won both elections in 2015 and 2020, but the impact on the region's welfare and economy appears more complex than expected.

In 2015, the "Beramal" pair secured 56.38% of the vote. In 2020, their vote share decreased to 51.40%. Despite the decline in vote share in 2020, the results are still notable, as

the period after this election shows improvement in welfare, even if the vote percentage was lower.

Table 5. Winning Votes for Election Winners, Poverty Rates, and Contribution of the Agriculture and Fisheries Sectors in Konawe Islands Regency 2015-2023.

Regional Head Election	Winner's Vote Acquisition (%)	Year	*Poverty (%)	*Contribution of Agriculture and Fisheries Sector (%)
2015	56.38	2015	16.73	55.93
		2016	17.72	54.77
		2017	18.10	54.44
		2018	17.48	54.03
		2019	17.18	54.05
2020	51.40	2020	17.01	54.24
		2021	17.81	53.12
		2022	16.15	52.75
		2023	15.90	54.24

*Sumber: *Central Statistics Agency of Konawe Islands Regency, (2024)*

***Poverty Trends (2016-2019)*:** Between 2016 and 2019, poverty in Konawe Islands actually increased, despite the 56.38% vote share in 2015. This suggests that the initial election victory and the policies implemented during this period did not effectively address or reduce poverty, implying that the vote share did not directly lead to meaningful improvements in people's welfare.

***Regional Economic Contribution (2015-2019)*:** The contribution of the agricultural and fisheries sectors to the regional economy showed a decline: 2015: 55.93%; and 2019: 54.05%. This decline in sectoral contribution suggests that the policies or leadership of the elected regional heads did not foster significant growth or development in these critical sectors, which are essential to the local economy.

***2020-2023 Shift*:** 2020 Election: Despite the decrease in vote share to 51.40%, there was an improvement in welfare. The poverty rate decreased from 17.01% in 2020 to 15.90% in 2023. This suggests that the leadership of Amrullah and Andi Muhammad Lutfi, after their 2020 victory, may have implemented policies or strategies that more effectively addressed poverty, leading to a positive impact on welfare during the latter half of their term.

***Economic Stability*:** The contribution of the agricultural and fisheries sectors remained largely stagnant: 2020: 54.24%; and 2023: 54.24%. While there was a decrease in poverty, the regional economic structure, particularly in these key sectors, showed little to no growth, suggesting that economic diversification or significant policy changes in these areas may have been lacking.

***Poverty Alleviation*:** The decrease in poverty from 17.01% in 2020 to 15.90% in 2023 following the 2020 election suggests that welfare improvements may have occurred, despite the decline in electoral support (from 56.38% to 51.40%). This indicates that the second term of leadership (post-2020) might have been more effective in addressing poverty, perhaps due to new policies or increased focus on welfare programs.

***Economic Performance*:** The stagnation of the agricultural and fisheries sectors (with contributions staying at around 54%) indicates that while poverty alleviation made some progress, the broader regional economy did not experience significant growth or diversification. This suggests that the focus of the regional administration might have been more on immediate welfare concerns rather than long-term economic transformation or sectoral development.

While the decrease in electoral support from 2015 to 2020 (from 56.38% to 51.40%) might suggest declining political popularity, the 2020-2023 period saw positive changes in welfare, such as a reduction in poverty. However, the economic stagnation in agriculture and fisheries points to a missed opportunity for more robust economic development in these vital sectors. The study shows that electoral success does not always correlate directly with economic prosperity or poverty alleviation, but it can still influence welfare outcomes, especially when focused leadership addresses urgent social needs, as seen in the post-2020 period in Konawe Islands Regency.

DISCUSSION

***Electoral Politics Among Fishermen and Farmers*:** The study of electoral politics has gained significant attention since 2020, covering various levels of political engagement, from local and national movements to global scales, such as trade wars between countries. The period from 2014 to 2024 has witnessed the active participation of farmers and fishermen, who have become key actors in class-based politics. Their involvement is often framed around compensation politics, especially in commodity trade, where political leaders offer benefits in exchange for electoral support (votes).

***Key Findings in Electoral Politics (2014-2024)*:** Based on the results of the analysis, there are three main points to consider. The *first* is about Compensation Politics in the Electoral System. In the United States, as noted by Gulotty and Strezhnev (2023), electoral districts that received higher compensation (e.g., subsidies or trade protection) in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election saw a higher share of Republican votes, especially Trump votes. This suggests that electoral support can be driven by tangible economic benefits, particularly in regions facing economic hardship or relying heavily on agriculture. In Europe, particularly in federal and regional systems, politicians have been shown to allocate more agricultural subsidies when political competition with the dominant party increases. Kvartiuk and Herzfeld (2021) find that political actors target larger farms for voter

mobilization, suggesting that larger players in agriculture are often prioritized in compensation politics. Electoral politics in China, as reported by Janzen and Hendricks (2020), revolves around the unequal distribution of market facilitation subsidies. Political leaders use these subsidies strategically to influence votes, particularly in regions with strong electoral support. However, regions with low voter turnout may not receive compensation, even in the face of trade conflicts, highlighting an imbalance in political strategies.

Second, regarding Long-Term Political Benefits. Gupta (2024) highlights that there is often a significant correlation between commodity prices and electoral cycles, where price stability or increases before and during elections contribute to economic development. This suggests that electoral politics in farming and fishing communities is closely tied to the economic conditions of the primary industry.

Third, Social Movements and Political Engagement. Mills (2023); and Mehta and Sinha (2022) highlight the growing political awareness among fishermen and farmers. Their increased participation in political movements aims to broaden social movements and draw attention to welfare, farming and fisheries issues. Marginalized populations are increasingly using collective action to influence politics.

***Problems in electoral politics*:** Despite electoral engagement progress, two major challenges could affect future elections:

Shim (2022) argues that politicians still use manipulative promises to gain votes, highlighting the issue of clientelism and manipulation. This entails exaggerating social welfare promises during campaigns then not delivering once in office. This behavior devalues electoral politics and breeds cynicism.

Risman *et al.* (2023) found that fisherman commonly show apathy and inactivity during elections, due to several circumstances.

Long-term candidates can cause voter fatigue and political attachment. Campaign promises may not match reality, leading to disappointment when elected officials fail to deliver.

Election organizers may not effectively inform or engage voters, particularly in rural or isolated places, leading to disengagement.

d. Empty rhetoric: Candidates' empty promises and lack of follow-through might hinder campaign effectiveness.

The level of engagement in electoral politics varies among communities, with some viewing elections with indifference or mistrust based on prior experiences.The study of electoral politics from 2014 to 2024 has highlighted important trends in how farmers and fishermen influence and are influenced by political practices, particularly through compensation politics related to commodity trade. The case studies from the United States, Europe, and China demonstrate how economic benefits can shape electoral outcomes. However, persistent challenges like clientelism and voter apathy, especially among fishermen, continue to hinder the full potential of electoral engagement. The need for more genuine political engagement and effective policymaking remains critical for ensuring that political processes serve the needs of vulnerable communities.

***Clientelism Among Fishermen and Farmers*:** Clientelism in fishing and farming villages strengthens patron-client relationships and patronage politics, when political elites use the community's economic dependence to win elections. Material promises and economic gains drive short-term voting decisions rather than candidate quality or political agendas.

The key clientelism results are: Firstly, fishermen and patron-client relationships. Aida *et al*. (2020) say fishermen's clientelism is economic and non-economic. Fishing operations require financial assistance. Politicians and captains regularly give fishermen money to market fish. Fishermen are economically dependent on their patrons for capital and jobs. Haryanto (2017) notes that patron-client connections in fishing villages are strongly ingrained and involve monetary aid, material support, and non-economic arrangements like job access for the poor. Fishermen give the catch in exchange for material or financial support, promoting economic reliance and clientelism.

Second, farming patronage. Noak (2024) notes that political elites in farming areas use farmers' economic dependence to sustain patronage regimes. Elites promise subsidies or aid for votes. This creates transactional politics, where voters prioritize short-term gains over candidate quality or vision. This promotes vote buying and weakens electoral integrity.

Third, political power and landowners. Beg (2021) shows another clientelism where landowners and resource elites maintain political power through structural economic reliance. In non-democratic regimes, landlords can use crop sharing agreements and private transfers to gain tenant loyalty. The political economy of agriculture strengthens patronage regimes by allowing landlords to buy votes with their control over wages, harvests, and government aid. Third, Landowners and Political Power Beg (2021) presents another pattern of clientelism where landowners and resource elites maintain their political power through entrenched networks of economic dependence. For instance, in non-democratic regimes, landowners can manipulate crop sharing agreements and private transfers to secure loyalty from their tenants. These patronage systems are strengthened by the political economy of agriculture, where landlords use their control over resources (wages, harvests, government assistance) to exert influence over voters, effectively buying their votes.

Fourth, Vote-Buying and Political Capture. The relationship between power holders and farmers is typically distinguished by the management of resources that can be exchanged for votes, according to Roberts *et al*. (2022); Liu (2021); Aida *et al*. (2020); Anderson *et al*. (2015); Ferrol-Schulte *et al*. (2014). This makes political elites buyers of votes and farmers, especially those dependent on local elites, sellers. This strategy promotes transactional politics, where elections are centered on tangible gains rather than politicians' policies.

Fifth, Clientelism's Long-Term Effects. Pellicer and Wegner (2023) warn that clientelism can become a self-perpetuating cycle where political elites and the community view it as an acceptable resource access technique. Systemic change is difficult as long as these tactics distort democracy and voters make decisions primarily on material promises. Clientelism must be addressed by identifying and resolving its root causes, according to Noak (2024). Low political education, limited information, and economic volatility increase citizens' dependence on village leaders who control access to key resources and government benefits.

Clientelism produces a vicious loop that compromises election integrity and encourages vote buying, as economic dependence drives political activity. This degrades democracy because people generally choose candidates based on short-term material gains rather than long-term policies or advancement. Political leaders use economic promises to obtain votes and preserve power in these relationships.

Noak (2024) proposes addressing the core causes of clientelism to interrupt the loop. This includes improving political education, information access, and economic stability to reduce dependence on local patrons and shift electoral politics from transactional exchanges to genuine democratic engagement based on policy debates and visionary leadership. Clientelism as a political strategy will continue to damage democracy until these concerns are addressed.

General Election on Regional Welfare and Economy: The study of electoral politics in Konawe Islands Regency reveals an interesting case of clientelism and its impact on regional welfare and the economy. The region has held two regional head elections: one in 2015 and the other in 2020, both of which were won by the candidate pair Amrullah and Andi Muhammad Lutfi, with the acronym "Beramal". Despite a decline in vote share from 56.38% in 2015 to 51.40% in 2020, the fishing community played a pivotal role in the electoral success of this pair.

Electoral Practices and Clientelism: The fishing community was a key support base for the "Beramal" pair, which used a social class approach to secure votes. According to Issac *et al.* (2022), this suggests that electoral politics were at play in the region, with the candidate pair engaging in practices that influenced political decisions within the fishing community.

There were efforts to maintain the dependence of fishermen on the authorities through various transactions of goods and/or services in exchange for political support. This fits the classic definition of clientelism, where political elites offer material benefits (e.g., assistance, subsidies, or job opportunities) to secure votes.

The clientelist practices align with the views of scholars like Bahamonde and Canales (2022); Hicken *et al.* (2022); Pellicer *et al.* (2021); Kramon (2017); Stokes *et al.* (2013), who argue that clientelism often relies on using economic dependency to mobilize electoral support.

Impact on Regional Welfare and Economy: During the first leadership period (2015–2019), there was an observable impact on regional welfare and the economy, particularly in terms of poverty alleviation. However, poverty rates declined between 2020 and 2023, despite the decline in vote acquisition from the 2020 election. This pattern raises a critical question: Does clientelism and electoral support translate into lasting economic benefits? The reduction in poverty post-2020, despite the drop in votes, suggests that there may be no direct correlation between electoral victories and regional welfare improvements.

Theoretical Challenges: Based on the data from Konawe Islands Regency, the study questions the validity of a theoretical link between vote acquisition and long-term economic benefits or poverty alleviation. The decline in poverty rates in 2020–2023, coupled with the decreased vote share for the winning candidates in 2020, weakens the assumption that clientelism directly correlates with regional economic improvement. This finding aligns with the views of Chyzh and Urbatsch (2021), who found that there was no clear relationship between production (agriculture) and vote acquisition. This contradicts the idea that economic benefits tied to electoral politics necessarily lead to improvements in community welfare or regional development.

Contradicting Findings from Other Studies: The findings from this study contrast with the work of Mills (2023); and Mehta and Sinha (2022), who argue that electoral politics can play a role in improving awareness of services and economic improvements for farmers and fishermen. These scholars suggest that patronage politics can create positive feedback loops where the support given to voters during elections leads to improved economic conditions.

Similarly, Gupta (2024) explicitly argues that economic benefits tied to general elections are significant, suggesting a positive relationship between political participation and economic development in farming and fishing communities. However, this study from Konawe Kepulauan does not support this view, as the evidence shows no consistent or direct link between electoral support and economic outcomes in the case of fishermen and farmers in the region. Elections and clientelism in Konawe Islands Regency are complicated. While clientelist behaviors were evident, especially in the fishing community, regional welfare and the economy did not improve as planned. The data show that vote acquisition and clientelism may not lead to long-term economic development or poverty reduction, especially in fishing areas. This study suggests reassessing the relationship between electoral practices, clientelism, and regional welfare to better understand how electoral politics can promote economic growth and sustainable development in marginalized communities. The findings also suggest that scholars reassess whether clientelism improves vulnerable groups' wellbeing or simply entrenches short-term transactional politics without alleviating economic dependency.

Conclusion: Clientelism and electoral politics are still used throughout America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Regional differences and welfare inequality push political elites to create patronage networks to win votes from underprivileged communities like fishers and farmers. Clientelism has long plagued political politics, but it has also caused voter indifference, especially among fishermen and farmers who feel neglected. Even after two regional head elections, clientelism and electoral politics did not affect vote acquisition in Konawe Kepulauan Regency. In the 2015 and 2020 elections, electability decreased, while agriculture and fisheries demonstrated dynamic but not major poverty reduction and economic contributions. This shows that clientelism, electoral politics, and regional welfare in Konawe Kepulauan are logically weak and may not benefit the local economy or reduce poverty.Proposals for Overcoming Clientelism and Improving Electoral Politics:

1. Regeneration of Political Candidates (Patrons);
   There is a need for regeneration of political figures and candidates from political parties. This is important because long-standing political figures (patrons) can contribute to voter passivity. A fresh pool of candidates with new ideas and approaches could revitalize political engagement among voters and reduce the influence of entrenched political elites.
2. Alignment of Campaign Promises with Social Realities;
   Campaign promises should be realistic and directly address the pressing social issues and economic needs of communities, particularly fishermen and farmers. Research has shown that when campaign promises are perceived as unattainable or disconnected from the voters' actual concerns, it leads to apathy. Ensuring that promises reflect tangible, achievable goals could help boost voter engagement.
3. Innovation in Electoral Process and Voter Education;
   Electoral organizers must innovate by improving socialization and outreach. Voter education campaigns should be tailored to the demographic and regional characteristics of each area. By ensuring that the electorate is better informed about the electoral process and the candidates, organizers can encourage greater participation and reduce apathy.
4. Presentation of Competent and Trustworthy Candidates;
   Political candidates (patrons) must not only be competent and trustworthy, but their personal histories—particularly related to legal violations or social records—should be transparent. This will help build public trust and demonstrate that candidates are committed to serving the community rather than merely engaging in transactional politics.
5. Building Collective Awareness and Community Engagement;
   It is essential to foster collective awareness at the community level. This involves understanding the perspectives of different community groups and creating inclusive political strategies that resonate with local concerns. By engaging with communities in a more meaningful way, it becomes easier to build political consensus and reduce the influence of clientelism.

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